The 1999 Base Year Academic Performance Index (API)

General Questions and Answers about the 1999 API

Background

What is the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA)?

The Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) was signed into law in April 1999. The legislation creates a new educational accountability system for California focused on improving students' academic performance. The PSAA has three main components.

1. The Academic Performance Index (API) is used to measure school performance and to report gains or losses in school performance over time.

2. The Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) offers support and financial resources to schools in need of improvement.

3. The Governor's Performance Award Program (GPAP) provides a reward system for schools that demonstrate improvement or high achievement.

What is the Academic Performance Index (API)?

A primary component of the PSAA is the Academic Performance Index (API). The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and progress of schools. It is a numeric index (or score) between 200 and 1000, reflecting a school's performance level.

From API results, schools will be held accountable for improving students' academic performance. Schools are ranked according to their API and are expected to show improvement in students' academic achievement by meeting annual API growth targets, including growth targets for each numerically significant ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroup in a school. The school's API growth is considered relative to an interim statewide API performance target of 800.

Do all schools receive an API?

Most, but not all, schools are included in the system of API ranking and growth targets beginning in 1999. The API and annual growth targets are calculated for elementary, middle, and comprehensive high schools, including charter schools, that have 100 or more students with valid Stanford 9 test scores from the state's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program.

Schools with fewer than 100 students with valid scores, along with alternative schools, continuation high schools, and county-administered schools, will participate in an alternative accountability system to be developed by July 1, 2000.

How was the API developed?

In April of 1999, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin convened a broad-based advisory committee of educators and business leaders to oversee the development of all aspects of the PSAA. The subcommittee for the API worked with a technical team of university and education research specialists and school district evaluation directors to create the 1999 API. The State Board of Education adopted the design for the 1999 base year API in November 1999.

How the 1999 API is Calculated

What indicators are included in the 1999 API?

The API will eventually consist of a number of indicators. Initially, beginning with the 1999 base year API, only the results of the Stanford 9 will be included. This nationally-normed test is administered to all California public school students in grades 2 through 11 as part of the STAR program. As available, other indicators will be phased in over time. Additional indicators are to include a test aligned to the state's academic standards and a high school exit examination. The API may also include other factors, including graduation rates and attendance rates for students and school staff when these are available. (At present, the state does not yet have a system for accurately collecting data on graduation and attendance rates.) The law requires that test results constitute at least 60 percent of the API. To measure growth accurately over time, no indicator will be used to compute growth in the API until two years of data are available.

When will other indicators be added to the API?

Possibly in the spring of 2001 (more likely by the spring of 2002), test items based on the rigorous statewide academic standards (the augmented STAR) are scheduled to be added to the API, although they will not be used in measuring a school's year-to-year growth until the following year when two years of augmented STAR data are available. In 2004, when the high school exit examination is used to determine student eligibility for graduation, the results will be added to the API. Other factors, including attendance and graduation rates, will be added as accurate data become available.

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How the 1999 API is Calculated (continued)

How is the 1999 API calculated for a school?
Calculation of the 1999 API involves a formula for combining individual student scores in each subject area on the 1999 Stanford 9 into a single number that represents the performance of a school based on pupil achievement. The national percentile rank (NPR) of the student score is used to reflect individual student achievement at a school. The percentages of students scoring within each of five NPR performance levels (called performance bands) are weighted and combined to produce a summary result for a content area. Summary results for content areas are also weighted and added together to produce a single number between 200 and 1000. This single number represents the school's API score. The minimum score on the API is 200; the maximum is 1000. Schools must have valid Stanford 9 test scores from at least 100 students to obtain an API score.

How are schools' 1999 API scores ranked?
Schools' API scores are ranked separately within school type: elementary, middle, and high schools. For each category, schools' API scores are sorted from lowest to highest and then divided into ten equal groups (or deciles) ranked from lowest (one) to highest (ten). A second decile ranking compares each school's API score to those of other schools that have "similar characteristics." In statute, these characteristics include student mobility, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, percentage of teachers with full credentials, percentage of teachers holding emergency permits, average class size per grade level, percentage of students who are English language learners, and whether schools operate multi-track, year-round programs. A particular school might be in the fifth decile when compared to all California schools, but in the tenth decile when compared with other similar schools.

Are all student scores on the Stanford 9 included in the 1999 API?
By law, only scores for pupils enrolled in the district during the previous school year may be included in the 1999 API. In addition, standard exclusion rules employed by the CDE and test publisher in reporting school level results are applied. Except for these exclusions, Stanford 9 results from English language learners will be included in a school's API.

What about schools with many English language learners?
Currently, all English language learners are required to take the Stanford 9 in English, and these scores are included in a school's API. By 2001, a new standards-based test specifically designed to test the knowledge and academic skills of English language learners may be implemented. The results from this test may be included in the 2001 API to give a more complete picture of school performance.

Where is detailed information about how to calculate the API?
Detailed information about calculation of the 1999 API is in *The 1999 Base Year Academic Performance Index (API)* on CDE's web site at http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa.

How the 1999-2000 Growth Target is Calculated

What is the interim statewide API performance target?
The PSAA requires that, upon adoption of state performance standards by the State Board of Education (SBE), a statewide API performance target be adopted so that schools may either meet the statewide performance target or their annual growth targets to be eligible for awards. Because state performance standards have not yet been adopted, the SBE adopted an interim statewide API performance target for 1999 of 800. This target defines a high level of performance on the Stanford 9 to which all schools in California should aspire. This interim target will serve as the statewide performance target until the SBE adopts state performance standards. At that point, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction will recommend and the State Board will adopt a permanent statewide API performance target as required by law.

How are 1999-2000 school growth targets determined?
The annual growth target for a school corresponds to five percent of the distance between a school's API and the interim statewide API performance target of 800. A school with a 1999 API of 500, for instance, would have a goal of 515 on the 2000 API, or a growth target of five percent of the distance between 500 and 800. A school with a 1999 API of 800 or more must maintain an API of at least 800 in order to meet its growth target. For any school with an API below 800, the minimum annual growth target is at least one point.

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How the 1999-2000 Growth Target is Calculated (continued)

What is the difference between a school's "growth target" and a school's "growth"?
A school's growth target is the amount of improvement a school is expected to make in its API score in a year. The 1999-2000 growth targets for schools will be reported in January 2000. A school's growth is the amount of actual gain or loss a school makes in its API score in a year (i.e., its 2000 API score minus its 1999 API score). The 1999-2000 growth for schools will be reported in the fall of 2000. Generally, if a school's growth meets or exceeds its growth target it may be eligible to receive an award through the Governor's Performance Award Program (GPAP), and if the school does not it may be eligible for interventions through the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP).

How will schools' 1999-2000 growth be ranked?
The same process used to rank API scores by deciles will be used to rank schools' API growth in the fall of 2000. At that time, schools' 1999-2000 growth will be sorted by school type: elementary, middle, and high schools. Within each type, a school's growth will be sorted from lowest to highest and then divided into ten equal groups (or deciles) ranked from lowest (one) to highest (ten). Growth rankings are additionally reported in comparison with other schools that have similar characteristics. (See also **"How are schools' 1999 API scores ranked?"** on page 2.)

What is meant by "comparable improvement"?
In order for a school to be eligible for awards, it must not only meet or exceed its schoolwide growth target but also reflect comparable improvement in academic achievement by all numerically significant ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroups. With several minor exceptions, each numerically significant subgroup must meet or exceed 80% of the school's growth target in order for the school to meet the comparable improvement criterion.

Subgroup APIs will be calculated for the following categories of students:
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Filipino
- Hispanic or Latino
- African American not Hispanic
- White not Hispanic
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged

What is a meant by a "numerically significant subgroup"?
A numerically significant subgroup is a subgroup of students at a school constituting (1) at least 30 students and at least 15 percent of a school's total student population or (2) at least 100 students (even if these 100 students are less than 15% of the school's total student population).

What is a meant by a "socioeconomically disadvantaged" student?
A socioeconomically disadvantaged student is defined as 1) a student neither of whose parents have received a high school diploma or 2) a student who participates in the free or reduced price lunch program.

Are English language learners considered a "subgroup" for API calculations?
English language learners are not considered a "subgroup" for comparable improvement calculations.

Where is detailed information about how to calculate growth targets and comparable improvement?
Detailed information about calculation of growth targets and comparable improvement can be found in *The 1999 Base Year Academic Performance Index (API)* located on the CDE web site at http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa.

Reporting of API Results

When will 1999 API results be released?
The 1999 API reports and information packets will be mailed to school districts by January 14, 2000. The information packets will be posted on the California Department of Education (CDE) web site at that time. Districts will send API results to each school. On January 19, 2000, the 1999 API reports will be mailed to county superintendents, and a teleconference about the API results will be provided.

The information for the public will be released to the press and posted on the CDE web site on January 25, 2000 at:

http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa

The 1999 Base Year Academic Performance Index (API)

General Questions and Answers about the 1999 API

Reporting of API Results (continued)

What reports will school districts and county offices receive?

1999 API Reports

In January 2000, school districts and county offices of education will receive for each school:

- **1999 API score and rank**
  - School score
  - School rank compared to schools statewide
  - School rank compared to schools with similar characteristics
  - Score for each numerically significant subgroup
- **1999-2000 growth target**
  - School growth target
  - Growth target for each numerically significant subgroup
- **2000 API target** (i.e., 1999 API score plus 1999-2000 growth target)
  - School API target
  - API target for each numerically significant subgroup
- **Related background data on school demographic characteristics**

2000 API Reports

In the fall of 2000, school districts and county offices of education will receive 2000 API reports covering the same type of information as in the 1999 API reports except that the data will be from 2000. In addition, they will also receive information on growth from 1999 to 2000 for each school:

- **1999-2000 growth and rank**
  - School growth
  - School growth rank compared to schools statewide
  - School growth rank compared to schools with similar characteristics
  - Growth for each numerically significant subgroup
  - Information on whether growth targets were met

API scores are on a scale of 200 to 1000; ranks are on a scale of 1 to 10.

What reports will be on the CDE web site?

Public reporting of the API results will be posted on the CDE web site in report, file, and data query format and will include the same information that is sent to school districts and county offices of education with the exception of certain detailed school and subgroup data.

How can media representatives get the API results?

The 1999 API results will be available on the CDE web site. Files can be downloaded; instructions for downloading will be disseminated in January 2000. Data disk files will not be available.

How and when must schools report their API information to parents and the public?

By law, schools must annually report their API ranking in their local School Accountability Report Cards starting in July 2000. Each school district's governing board must discuss these results at a regularly scheduled meeting. (A School Accountability Report Card is produced by every school as required by Proposition 98. The report cards provide information about schools according to specific criteria and are available to parents.)

How the 1999 API Will Be Used

How will the API be used to hold schools accountable?

Schools are expected to meet or exceed their annual growth targets. API information will be reported to schools, districts, and the public each year. If a school meets or exceeds its API growth target or the interim statewide API performance target and meets comparable improvement criteria, it will be eligible to receive monetary or non-monetary awards (through the GPAP). If it does not, it may be identified for the interventions program (through the II/USP). Schools in the interventions program that fail to meet growth targets or show significant growth over time will be subject to local interventions, and eventually state sanctions.

Must a certain percentage of students be tested in order to meet targets or qualify for awards?

Percentage of students tested will be reported in the 1999 API reports but is currently not a criterion for meeting growth targets for the purposes of eligibility for the interventions program. Specific criteria for awards will be developed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and adopted by the State Board of Education during the spring of 2000 and may include percent tested as a criterion for awards.

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How the 1999 API Will Be Used (continued)

How do the API results fit with other information about a school's academic progress?

The API results are one of the ways to measure a school's performance and progress. Other indicators for monitoring school performance and growth may include, but are not limited to, descriptive and longitudinal information currently reported by schools on their School Accountability Report Cards. API results can be used to help measure a school's progress over time and to provide comparisons with other schools, including those with similar demographic characteristics.

When do interventions and awards "kick in"?

The "interventions" component of PSAA has already begun. In 1999-2000, an initial group of 430 schools volunteered and were selected for the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). These schools must meet their 2000-2001 growth targets or will face local interventions in the fall of 2001. If these schools fail to meet their 2001-2002 growth targets *and* fail to show significant growth after two years of implementation they may be subject to state sanctions in the fall of 2002. The "awards" component of PSAA, the Governor's Performance Award Program (GPAP), will begin once API growth data are available in the fall of 2000. The State Board of Education (SBE) will adopt awards criteria by the spring of 2000.

How much funding is available for interventions and awards?

For the 1999-2000 school year, $96 million is available to support an initial group of 430 schools that volunteered and were selected for the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). This program provides resources for underperforming schools to support development and implementation of school action plans aimed at increasing student achievement.

An additional $96 million is available for the Governor's Performance Award Program (GPAP). The GPAP will provide monetary and non-monetary awards for schools that meet or exceed their API growth target or the interim statewide API performance target and demonstrate comparable improvement in academic achievement by all numerically significant ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroups.

Will charter schools participating in the categorical block grant be eligible to apply for GPAP and II/USP?

Charter schools included in the categorical block grant funding will not be eligible to apply separately for PSAA funding.

How does the API relate to Assembly Bill 1114, the legislation providing certificated staff performance incentives?

AB 1114 (Chapter 52 of 1999) was passed and approved in June 1999. It provides $50 million for one-time performance bonuses to teachers and other certificated staff in underachieving schools. The maximum amount allocated to a school will be up to $25,000 per full-time equivalent certificated staff. For purposes of the law, an "underachieving school" is defined as any school with an Academic Performance Index (API) that places it below the 50th percentile relative to other public schools statewide in the year prior to the award. Performance bonuses will go to certificated staff in any of these schools that significantly improve beyond the five-percent annual growth target in the API. Any school district with schools that meet the eligibility criteria may apply for funding under this Act. Charter schools that meet the criteria may also apply. County boards, county superintendents of schools, and state agencies are not eligible to participate.

How will awards criteria for GPAP and AB 1114 be determined?

The State Board of Education, at its December 1999 meeting, approved the plan for developing AB 1114 criteria. A PSAA subcommittee on awards will begin convening in January 2000 to identify and develop recommendations for implementing both GPAP and AB 1114. These recommendations will be provided to the State Board for adoption in the spring of 2000, and funds are anticipated to be allocated in the fall of 2000.

For More Information…

Questions about 1999 API results should be directed to the Office of Policy and Evaluation of the California Department of Education at (916) 657-2273 (phone), (916) 657-5201 (fax), or psaa@cde.ca.gov (email). Additional information can be obtained at http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa on the CDE web site.